

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 13th, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We urge you to change the access rules governing the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Monument to guarantee the fishing rights of both recreational and commercial fishermen. We urge you to lift any restrictions on fishing and return fisheries management to the regional fisheries management councils.

Misusing the authority of the Antiquities Act, President Obama unilaterally, without any consent from Congress or local stakeholders, designated the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Monument about 130 miles off the coast of Cape Cod. This designation has prohibited commercial fishing in more than 4,900 square miles of ocean, or about an area the size of Connecticut. The rules governing the Monument prohibit all commercial fishing in the area except for lobster and red crab fishing which are exempt from the regulation for seven years. While recreational fishing is currently minimally impacted by the Monument designation there is concern that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) stated, last year, that future restrictions and permit requirements may be necessary for the recreational sector. The recreational sector is also prohibited from anchoring anywhere within the boundaries of the Monument which has the potential to severely impact traditional recreational fishing activities.

For what sensible purpose does the federal government wall off a massive section of ocean and prohibit its use by American citizens?

The United States has one of the most highly regulated, most sustainable, and environmentally friendly fisheries systems in the world. By closing off this robust fishery we are ensuring that Americans will be eating more seafood from countries that aren't as responsible as us. We will be enriching the fishing fleets of Asian and European nations, including those hostile to American interests.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act, which governs our fisheries, is designed to ensure sustainable fisheries resources while also producing a maximum sustainable yield for our fishermen. NOAA fisheries and the regional management councils have taken strong measures to reduce the catch of overfished stocks, many times to the detriment of local fishermen. The regional councils are more than capable of preserving our natural resources while at the same time allowing our fisherman to make a living. We should not have to choose between the livelihoods of our fishermen and the health of our fisheries. There is a balance that we are required by law to meet, and when that balance starts to shift too far to the side of the fisheries we start to see drastic consequences in our coastal communities.

The closing of over 4,900 square miles of ocean to commercial fishing doesn't just have the potential to put commercial fishermen out of business but also damage entire communities. The local retail and restaurant industry in many communities is entirely dependent on a robust fishing economy. Many of these small businesses will inevitably be damaged by this monument designation. It is time that we put American fishermen first and restore their access to the fisheries that they have been responsibly fishing for generations.

We thank you for your leadership and look forward to your response.

Sincerely



Tom MacArthur
Member of Congress



Andy Harris
Member of Congress



Frank LoBiondo
Member of Congress



Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen
Member of Congress



David Rouzer
Member of Congress



Lee Zeldin
Member of Congress



Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress